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AUTHOR Brennan, Michael J.
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ABSTRACT

Both the social studies and humanities have imitated the sciences in 2 respects: in methodology, i.e., a passion for counting, documentation, exactitude, analysis, and critical exchanges that often border on the petulant; and in degree of specialization to the extent that the humanities are even more specialized than the sciences. This overspecialization has been a major contributor to the depressed condition in modern languages, history, philosophy, and some of the social sciences. Reaction to this specialization has set in with renewed enthusiasm for interdisciplinary programs of study and research. The problem arises with the need for integration of the various methodologies that each discipline has developed. The lack of integration plus the commitment to the culture of science explain to some extent the charges of irrelevance that have been levied against the social sciences and humanities. It is likely that new generations will come to scholarship with no hesitation of incorporating speculation or vision or insight or values into their publication, because they will have recognized that human existence does not consist solely in accumulating knowledge. (AF)

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RESEARCH COMPONENT - SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES*

Dr. Michael J. Brennan

Dean

Brown University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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DR. MICHAEL J. BRENNAN: It was with some sense of familiarity that I noted our topic was reassessment, so I suppose we are here today to reassess ourselves once more.

My bag is research in the humanities and the social studies and I hope you will pardon me for lumping these, both of the humanities and the social sciences in one bag.

Though I know that each deserves separate treatment, there is not time here to speak to their distinctive qualities, especially since Dean Spurr has warned

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me that if I don't finish by the coffee hour, he is going to break in and call the coffee hour anyway before I am finished.

Now in pondering on what I might say I found that I was repeating some veritable prophets. Knowing that few people enjoy stale news I do none the less believe that a restatement of these prophecies is warranted. My own original contribution to knowledge in the field is in a sense of these arguments to what I regard as the hinge of change in today's graduate school.

My postulate is a simple one: Both the social studies and humanities have imitated the sciences in two respects, in methodology and in degree of specialization.

As the natural sciences developed over the past century the contrast between so-called scientific method and other modes of thought was drawn to extremes. Of course, no respectable scientist believes that there is such a thing as "the" scientific method. And I think we should not allow my premise to be carried to the trash can on that digression. Rather, the advance of hypotheses, theoretical model building, quantification, prediction and empirical verification have demonstrated that

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such methods yield control over nature and over the future. And aside from its application in technology, I believe the glory of science has been its reliance on objectivity and its insistence upon empiriçal testing which together dismantle bigotry.

But the extreme is borne when philosophers and scientists propound credo that scientific methods lead to knowledge while everything that cannot be formulated clearly in discursive form is merely an expression of feeling or an exuding of private value judgments. And the tragedy of the humanities began when many swallowed that assertion.

Whether through self-images of inferiority or through pretenses to objectivity, representatives of the humanities have come to deny the legitimacy of vision or values or speculation, even while they ignore the fact that these are used in any scientific lab. Scholarship then embarks upon a passion for counting, documentation, exactitude, analysis, and critical exchanges that border on the petulant.

A consequence, too, of the imitation of science is an addiction to specialization. Scientists have judged that specialization is imperative, yet I would

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guess that the humanities today are more specialized than the sciences. And perhaps because the nature of challenging scientific problems and the routes to their solution now dictate that the trend toward ever more specialization should be reversed.

As imitators, the humanities lag. Over-specialization is a major contributor to what I would interpret as a depressed condition in modern languages, history, philosophy and some of the social sciences.

I said these postulates are not new. In 1925 Alfred North Whitehead was warning us of the cultural danger awaiting us if we continued on our course of intellectual specialization. For years Gustave Arlt has chided the humanities for an unseemly imitation of the sciences. I will now argue that collective measures on over-specialization are already under way. However, I will also argue that we have not yet faced up to the issue of methodology and that this issue lies near the heart of the assessment.

Research interests, like other phenomena are subject to evolution. Recognizing that we may have gone too far in specialization; recognizing, too, that our present cultural needs demand greater breadths of

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perspective, we spend much of our energy designing interdisciplinary programs of study and research. For we have discovered that solutions to the problem of the city, to environmental pollution, to poverty, to racism, and to institutional reform cannot be reached solely by reference to the traditional disciplines.

Usurping the hat of an economist and relinquishing for a moment that of a dean, I see a parallel between the contribution of the methods of physics to the breakthroughs in biology and what might come from a joining of the relatively powerful analytical tools of economics and the inexcites of soft sociology.

The upshot can be not only workable solutions to social problems but, from the purely intellectual view, the emergence of new, more comprehensive disciplines.

Even now theology links up with sociology, psychology with linguistics, philosophy with economics. I can imagine that departments of modern languages, the classics and anthropology will evolve into departments or centers of modern civilizations housing literary critics, historians, philosophers and social scientists, all plying their trades to the product of that civilization.

But caution says it is advisable to pause

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and consider how we are going about this enterprise. Basically we manipulate administrative structures to reach an intellectual objective.

A year ago I sat through a C.G.S. panel discussion and listened to distinctions drawn between interdisciplinary, crossdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and pandisciplinary studies. (Laughter)

Having created departments as convenient administrative units, and having identified these units with segments of knowledge called disciplines, and finding that each such discipline has developed its own methodology, we are now faced with the difficult problem of integrating diverse methodologies. Thus we find ourselves able to agree that knowledge is all of a piece, and yet we can remain intractable to disciplinary merger on methodological grounds.

It has been said that the disasters of mankind are moved by the narrowness of men with a good method. The man with a method good only for his dominant interests is potentially a pathological case with respect to his wider judgment and the coordination of his method with the more complete human experience.

That the search for comprehensiveness is

delayed by separatist methods goes only part of the way toward explaining the now tiresome charge of irrelevance levied against the humanities and the social studies. Examination of these methods reveals a common commitment to the culture of science.

Since science is concerned with what and how we know, the culture of science subjugates visionary experience. The culture of science cannot locate its values in mystic symbol or ritual. But man, in addition to knower is dreamer and lover and myth-maker, spreads a scientific culture to the humanistic disciplines, tends to relegate visionary experience to a phenomenon to be studied by experts; tends to relegate visionary experience to the semi-eccentric world of the artist or the mystic.

We have C. P. Snow to thank for the unfortunate notion of two cultures. Rather, it would seem we are in desperate need of one culture, one culture in which the humanities and the humanistically-oriented social sciences define the context of science.

Human existence does not consist solely of accumulating knowledge. Man must live from day to day and he seeks to live in a way that integrates his whole being in knowledge, intuition, joy, and fellowship. He has a

need to shape his knowledge, his passions, his insight, his hopes, exuberance, his moral concerns into some scale of living. By defining the process of scholarship as the acquisition of knowledge through expertise, we diminish our own existence.

To expect a set of demonstrable propositions that would specify how the whole of life might be in the product of research instead of something fragmented on which research is done may, perhaps, reflect the extent to which we take for granted the culture of science. I hesitate to proclaim a new mode of consciousness, so I settle for a more modest proposal.

As in teaching, so in research. Renewal does not prescribe new methods so much as a new spirit.

I also hesitate to preach, so I offer a little forecast. I am willing to wager that upcoming generations, even without our encouragement, will do just that; in a new spirit, come to scholarship with no hesitance of incorporating speculation or vision or insight or values into their publications; of challenging the myths of this era in terms of a more animalistic interpretation of man.